

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Statement on Passage of District of Columbia Appropriations Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA) is pleased to report that the House of Representatives today approved H.R. 4850, “The District of Columbia Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2005,” by a vote of 371 to 54.

The appropriations bill provides a total of \$560 million in direct federal funding to the District of Columbia – including, for the second straight year, \$40 million for educational initiatives (\$13 million for public schools, \$13 million for charter schools and \$14 million for the D.C. School Choice program) and an increase to \$25.6 million for the D.C. College Access Program, which provides tuition assistance grants for D.C. high school graduates.

Chairman Davis spoke on the House floor in support of the bill. His statement follows:

“Over the past decade, the District of Columbia, which previously had faced a fiscal crisis of Shakespearean proportions, has embarked on an impressive road to financial recovery. With the help of the now-dormant Control Board and the 1997 Revitalization Act, the District has taken care of its financial house. It has balanced its budget for seven consecutive years, without tricks or gimmicks, and it has a cash reserve that is the envy of almost every municipality in the nation.

“The federal assistance provided in our annual appropriations bills promote and advance the rebirth of the District of Columbia.

“This year’s bill funds a wide range of programs that will enhance the quality of life for D.C. residents and those who visit and work in the Nation’s Capital. The increase in funding for emergency planning and security will help ensure that we are ready for the

worst. I'm pleased to see that the Child and Family Services Agency will continue to receive adequate funding to help protect the District's most vulnerable residents, and that the D.C. Court will have additional funds to continue its much-needed renovation project.

"I am particularly pleased the D.C. College Access Program will receive enhanced funding. The increase reflects the program's indisputable positive impact on the District. The College Access Program has been a key component of the District's revitalization efforts, and I am heartened that Chairman Frelinghuysen agrees that Congress needs to continue its partnership with the District in providing access to higher education resources and opportunities.

"The impact of this program is undeniable. At a Government Reform Committee hearing on the program in March, D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams testified that, since the creation of the program, the number of high school graduates in the District continuing on to college has increased 28 percent. The national average, over the same period, was an increase of approximately 5 percent. That's remarkable.

"Lastly, I want to thank Chairman Frelinghuysen for fully funding the D.C. School Choice initiative. The bill before us today maintains the careful balance we struck last year. Of the \$40 million for education, there's \$13 million for D.C. public schools for teacher training, recruitment and improving student achievement; these funds are in addition to the large increases already guaranteed to D.C. public schools through federal programs. There's another \$13 million for D.C. charter schools to support and expand their capacity. And there's \$13 million for the school choice scholarship program, along with an additional \$1 million for administrative expenses.

"The fact is, the District of Columbia has one of the most troubled public school systems in the United States. Take a look at Ballou High School. Over the past decade, five to seven Ballou students have been murdered each year. This is unacceptable. No child can be expected to learn in an unsafe environment – nor should we ask them to. Charter schools and transformational schools are popular and important educational alternatives. But there are simply not enough places in these schools to meet student and parent demand. Parents and children in D.C. public schools need and deserve more choices. The D.C. School Choice Act gives parents additional educational options for their children. It gives them a shot at a better life, the same shot we all want for our children.

"I want to thank Chairman Frelinghuysen for the time and energy he and his staff have devoted to reviewing the D.C. budget and bringing this bill to the floor."

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